

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 INR-07 SS-15 NSC-05
CIAE-00 NSAE-00 MC-02 ACDA-07 IGA-02 /065 W
-----041451Z 127059 /43

P R 041338Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2944
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2838

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SY, UR
SUBJECT: REPORTS OF SYRO-SOVIET AGREEMENT ON MILITARY ITEMS
IN MOSCOW

REF: (A) USDAO IR 6 891 0184 77/031158MAY 77, (B) USDAO
IR 6 891 0179 77/021413Z MAY 77

1. WE HAVE REVIEWED REPORTS OF SYRO-SOVIET TALKS IN
MOSCOW WITH SOURCES WHO SUPPLIED INFORMATION REPORTED BY
DATT IN REFTELS. BRITISH EMBOFF APRIL 30 APPRAISED US OF
HIS TALKS WITH ROMANIAN COUNTERPART ON OUTCOME OF ASAD
VISIT. ACCORDING TO ROMANIAN, SOVIETS SUPPLIED DAMASCUS
WITH IMMEDIATE GIFT OR SOFT LOAN OF 65 MILLION RUBLES AND
PLEDGED SOFT LOAN OF ONE BILLION RUBLES OVER FIVE-YEAR PERIOD.
CONCERNING MILITARY ITEMS, SOVIETS AGREED TO REOPEN (CLOGGED)
SPARE PARTS PIPELINE TO SYRIA AND ALSO AGREED TO TRAIN

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PALESTINIANS IN FORWARD ARTILLERY OBSERVATION. MORE
SIGNIFICANTLY, ROMANIAN CLAIMED THAT SOVIETS PROMISED
TO SUPPLY SYRIA WITH ADVANCED WEAXONS INCLUDING MIG-25
AIRCRAFT, TO BE FLOWN BY SYRIAN PILOTS WHO WOULD RECEIVE
THEIR TRAINING IN USSR. NUMBER OF SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL
STATIONED IN SYRIA WOULD INCREASE; BRIT COMMENTED THAT
ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL WOULD PRESUMABLY BE NEEDED TO

MAINTAIN AIRCRAFT.

2. WE HAVE RECEIVED FIRST REPORT SOURCE THAT MAJOR ITEMS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT HAVE RECENTLY ARRIVED IN SYRIA FROM USSR. WEST EUROPEAN EMBOFF MET WITH ROMANIAN EMBASSY CONTACT AND PASSED US SUBSTANCE OF LATTER'S REMARKS. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, ROMANIAN WAS IN TARTUS MAY 2 AND COUNTED SIXTY T-62 TANKS IN PORT AND ON ROAD FROM PORT. HE ALSO SAW "LARGE LORRIES" CARRYING COVERED ITEMS HE ASSUMED WERE "JET AIRCRAFT BODIES." ROMANIAN CLAIMED THREE ROMANIAN SHIPS WHICH HAD DOCKED AT PORT WERE MOVED OUT FOR TWO DAYS TO FACILITATE IMMEDIATE UNLOADING OF SOVIET VESSELS WHEN THEY REACHED SYRIA.

3. COMMENT: ROMANIANS ARE CURRENTLY MOST ACTIVE DISSEMINATORS OF INFORMATION ABOUT SYRO-SOVIET MILITARY WEAPONS AGREEMENTS AND ARRIVALS IN SYRIA. BRIT EMBOFF MENTIONED PARA ONE CAUTIONED HOWEVER, THAT ROMANIANS ARE OFTEN USED BY SOVIETS TO LEAK INFORMATION SOVIETS WISH TO SEE SPREAD ABOUT. HOWEVER, IN THIS CASE THEY ARE BEING ABETED BY SYRIANS WHO WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO INITIATE WITH DATT (REF B) REQUEST FOR EVALUATION OF MIG-25 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT PERFORMANCE.

4. PROMPT ARRIVAL OF SOME MATERIEL MAY INDICATE SOVIET EFFORT TO IMPACT ON SYRIAN LEADERSHIP PRIOR TO ASAD-CARTER MEETING IN GENEVA. POSSIBLE SOVIET DECISION TO SUPPLY SYRIA WITH MIG-25 FIGHTERS WOULD MARK MAJOR SHIFT IN SOVIET POLICY -- IF OUR UNDERSTANDING CORRECT THESE AIRCRAFT STILL NOT AVAILABLE TO MOSCOW'S EAST EUROPEAN ALLIES. WHILE WE CANNOT YET VERIFY THESE REPORTS. SOVIETS AND

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SYRIANS BOTH SEEM TO BE GETTING SIGNAL OUT, WITH US PERHAPS AS SPECIAL TARGET, THAT SYRIAN MILITARY OPTION HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED AND ALSO THAT SOVIETS MUST BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY INTO ACCOUNT IN SETTLEMENT AS PEACE PROCESS BEGINS TO REGAIN MOMENTUM.

5. THIS MESSAGE COORDINATED WITH DATT.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, COMMUNIST ECONOMIC AID
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC02838
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770156-0633
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770597/aaaadfka.tel
Line Count: 105
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e087169b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2648169
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REPORTS OF SYRO-SOVIET AGREEMENT ON MILITARY ITEMS IN MOSCOW
TAGS: EAID, MASS, SY, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e087169b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009